

R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 013 274

UD 003 857

WHITE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEGRO.

BY- SHEATSLEY, PAUL B.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE, BOSTON, MASS

PUB DATE

66

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.96 24F.

DESCRIPTORS- STATISTICAL DATA, *NORTHERN ATTITUDES, *SOUTHERN ATTITUDES, *NEGROES, *CAUCASIANS, *RACIAL ATTITUDES, SURVEYS, SCHOOL INTEGRATION, NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRATION, INTELLIGENCE, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (JOBS), DEMONSTRATIONS (CIVIL), CIVIL RIGHTS, SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION,

REVIEWED ARE THE TRENDS DURING THE PAST GENERATION IN THE CHANGES OF WHITE ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL INTEGRATION, RESIDENTIAL INTEGRATION, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION INTEGRATION, NEGRO EDUCABILITY, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS, AND THE NEGRO PROTEST MOVEMENT. THE ANALYSIS OF THESE TRENDS IS BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH POLLS. IN GENERAL WITHIN THE PAST TWO DECADES THERE HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT SHIFT IN BOTH THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH TOWARD AN ACCEPTANCE OF EQUAL RIGHTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE OPINION RESEARCH DATA SHOW A REVOLUTIONARY ATTITUDE CHANGE IN FEELINGS ABOUT SCHOOL INTEGRATION, THE BASIC AND RIGHTS ISSUE. FURTHERMORE, IN THOSE SOUTHERN AREAS WHERE THERE IS SCHOOL INTEGRATION, MORE WHITES ACCEPT IT, AND EVEN IN THE "HARD-CORE" AREAS WHITE APPROVAL HAS RISEN FROM 1 TO 28 PERCENT. WHILE MOST WHITES DO NOT SEEM TO "EAGERLY" ACCEPT INTEGRATION, AND WOULD PREFER THAT DESEGREGATION PROCEED MORE GRADUALLY, THEY DO RECOGNIZE THAT RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IS AMORAL AND THAT THE NEGRO PROTEST IS LEGITIMATE. THE PROTEST MOVEMENT HAS NOT HAD A BACKLASH EFFECT (BASED ON THE EVIDENCE THAT PRESIDENT JOHNSON CARRIED THE SOUTH IN 1964 DESPITE HIS CLEARLY STATED POSITION ON CIVIL RIGHTS), NOR HAS IT INTENSIFIED SEGREGATIONIST ATTITUDES. THESE AND MANY OTHER OBSERVATIONS ARE DISCUSSED IN THE ARTICLE WITH REFERENCE TO THE SPECIFIC FINDINGS OF THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "DAEDALUS," VOLUME 95, NUMBER 1, WINTER 1966. (NH)

U D 003857

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

ANY ATTEMPT to describe white attitudes toward Negroes in the 1870's or the 1890's, or immediately before or after World War I, must necessarily rely on impressionistic or anecdotal evidence, or on secondary studies of contemporary newspapers, letters, diaries, and similar materials. Only since the advent of public opinion research in the mid-nineteen thirties has it been possible to address a series of standard questions to representative samples of the general population by means of personal interviews, and to cross-tabulate the results by such factors as age, sex, race, and geographical region.

It tells much about white attitudes toward the Negro that, during the seven years from 1935 to 1942, only four questions bearing even indirectly on the subject seem to have been asked by the national public opinion polls of that time.¹ Three of these questions, dealing with opinions about the "lynching bill" then before Congress in 1937, are practically irrelevant because the results simply show that most Americans thought people should not be lynched and the question itself said nothing about race. The fourth question was asked in 1939 and reveals that two-thirds of the American public approved of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt's resignation from the Daughters of the American Revolution in protest against the refusal of that organization to permit a "well-known Negro singer" to give a concert in a D.A.R. hall. The polls, for obvious reasons, tend to ask their questions about the issues that are hot, and it is clear that, during the decade preceding World War II, race relations did not qualify on this basis. Negroes had their place, and it was a rare American white who became exercised over this fact of life.

Today, of course, the situation is entirely different. Since mid-summer 1963, the question of race relations has been consistently

Copyright © 1968 by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

217

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED
BY *American Academy
of Arts and Sciences*
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING
UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF
EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE
THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF
THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

ED013274

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

cited by Americans as "the most important problem facing the United States," except when it has been temporarily displaced by some international crisis such as Vietnam.² As in 1935-42, public opinion polls have responded to the times, but today they are doing so by asking every question they can think of which will reveal more clearly the white American's response to the Negro protest movement. The results of these polls are widely publicized, but quite often are contradictory and confusing. A recent Gallup report, for example, tells us that "Today, white Americans seem more sympathetic to Negro rights than they have ever been";³ a recent Harris report, on the other hand, warns that "At least for now, the dominant mood of white America is to put a brake on the pace of civil rights progress."⁴ Actually, surveys such as these tell us much more than the quotations suggest, and one poll does not differ from others so much as it differs from itself, depending upon the questions asked. Hardly any white Americans have attitudes toward Negroes which are clearly thought out and rigidly maintained; and even those who do may have sudden qualms when they read about racial murders in the South or Negro violence on Northern streets. The problem is one of interpreting what the polls and surveys tell us so we can understand what it all means.

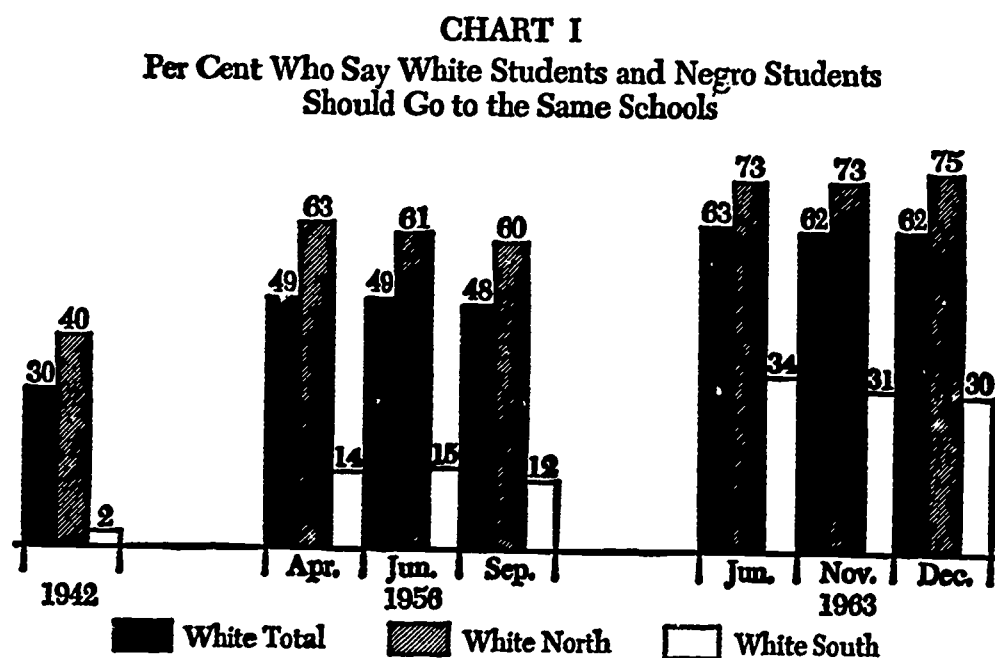
Proper interpretation of survey data requires some baseline or norm against which a particular finding can be evaluated. While it is of interest to know, for instance, that "eight in ten white Americans said they would not move" if a Negro family moved next door, or that 41 per cent feel that the pace of civil rights progress is too fast,⁵ the numbers have little meaning unless we can anchor them somehow. One means of anchoring is to compare findings over the course of time. The figures take on added significance if we can determine whether they are increasing or decreasing in response to events. A second means is to compare subgroup differences (for example, North vs. South, the well-educated vs. those with little formal education) against the national norm. We propose to examine past and current survey findings with a view to clarifying and interpreting their meaning. In the course of this examination we shall rely mainly, though not exclusively, on data gathered by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago. The NORC data are particularly suitable for two reasons. First, the earliest national survey of white attitudes toward Negroes was conducted by NORC on behalf of the Office of War Information in 1942, and a number of the same questions have been periodically repeated in subsequent

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

surveys. Second, in December 1963, NORC devoted an entire interview schedule to questions on race relations, administered to a national sample of white Americans. The possibilities of fruitful analysis of such a study are more promising than the examination of scattered poll results from a great number of separate surveys.

Twenty-Year Trends on School Integration⁶

Chart I shows for each of three years—1942, 1956, and 1963—



(This is an adaptation of a chart which appeared in an article by H. H. Hyman and P. B. Sheatsley, "Attitudes Toward Desegregation," *Scientific American*, Vol. 211, July 1964).

the proportion of American whites who expressed approval of integration when asked the question, "Do you think white students and Negro students should go to the same schools or to separate schools?"⁷ The most striking message of the chart is the revolutionary change in white attitudes, both North and South,⁸ which has taken place on this explosive issue in less than a generation. In 1942, not one American white in three approved of integrated schools. Even in the North, majority sentiment was strongly opposed, while in the South only two whites in one hundred could be found to support the proposition. By 1956, two years after the historic Supreme Court decision which abolished the "separate but equal" doctrine, white attitudes had shifted markedly. Nationwide, support for inte-

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

gration was now characteristic of about half the white population, while in the North it had clearly become the majority view. In the South, where only one white person in fifty had favored integration fourteen years earlier, the proportion by 1956 had risen to approximately one in seven.

The continuation of the trend from 1956 to 1963 is especially noteworthy, since the years between were marked by agitation and occasional violence which might easily have led one to suspect a reversal of attitudes and a white revulsion against integration. Desegregation of Southern schools in accordance with the Supreme Court decision had sparked physical conflict not only in Little Rock in 1957 but in dozens of smaller communities during these years. The start of the "sit-in" movement in 1960, the freedom rides of 1961, the Oxford riots of 1962 might well have hardened white attitudes and halted the trend toward acceptance of integration. But repetition of the same question to three different national samples in 1963 showed that this massive trend was still intact. By that year, almost two-thirds of all American whites expressed approval of integrated schools; among white persons in the North, the proportion was close to three in four. And in the South, which was then bearing the brunt of the Negro protest movement, sentiment for integration had climbed even faster, so that almost a third of all white Southerners agreed that white students and Negro students should attend the same schools.

The strength of the long-term trend was further attested by its immunity to short-run events. In both 1956 and 1963, it was possible to ask the question on three separate surveys at different times of the year, and it is evident that all three surveys in each year produced essentially identical results.⁹ One would not necessarily have expected such short-term stability. Though largely forgotten now, there appeared between the June and September 1956 surveys the first banner headlines of racial conflict as the long slow task of Southern school desegregation began in Clay, Kentucky, Clinton, Tennessee, and other small towns in border states across the country. Between June and November 1963, there occurred the march on Washington and the September school openings, while between the November and December surveys there intervened the shocking assassination of President Kennedy in a Southern metropolis. But even so dramatic an event, with all its implications for the civil rights movement, failed to disturb, in either North or South, the attitudes which had been expressed a month earlier.

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

The figures shown on the chart for the South represent, of course, a geographical composite of Deep South states like Mississippi and Alabama, border states such as West Virginia and Kentucky, and southwestern states such as Arkansas and Oklahoma. We shall indicate certain regional differences later. It is possible, however, to sort the Southern respondents to the 1963 surveys into three groups, according to the amount of school integration in their communities. When this is done, it is found that a solid majority of Southern whites (58 per cent), in those few places where there had been (as of 1963) considerable integration of schools, declared that they approved of school integration. In Southern communities which had accepted only some token desegregation, 38 per cent approved; while in the hard-core segregationist communities, only 28 per cent were in favor of integration. Though the sample sizes are small, particularly in the desegregated areas, the correlation is clear: Where integration exists in the South, more whites support it.¹⁰

It is dangerous to try to unravel cause and effect from mere statistical correlation, yet a close analysis of the data indicates that official action to desegregate Southern schools did not wait for majority opinion to demand it, but rather preceded a change in community attitudes. In the 1956 surveys, only 31 per cent of Southern whites in those few areas which had begun at least token desegregation expressed approval of integrated schools. Clearly there was no public demand for integration in those areas then. Furthermore, by 1963 the integrated areas included not only those communities which had pioneered in integration in 1956, but also many additional communities where anti-integration sentiment had in 1956 been even stronger. Yet by 1963 the majority of Southern whites in such communities had accepted the integration of their schools. It may be noted that even in the most segregationist parts of the South, approval of integration has continued to climb. In 1956, only 4 per cent of Southern whites residing in segregated school areas approved of integration, but by 1963 the proportion in communities which had not by then introduced even token integration—the essential “hard-core” areas—had nevertheless risen to 28 per cent.

Trends on Other Racial Issues

School integration is one of the most basic and explosive of the civil rights issues, and it has provided perhaps the most apt illustration of the dramatic shift in white attitudes over the past two

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

decades. Additional evidence from the same surveys is available, however, to show that the increasing accommodation of whites to equal rights has not been restricted to the schools, but extends to other spheres as well. Table 1 shows the trends in attitudes with re-

TABLE 1. Per Cent Who Approve Residential and Public Transportation Integration in 1942, 1956, June and December, 1963

Approval of . . .	Surveys in			
	1942	1956	June 1963	Dec. 1963
<i>Residential Integration</i>				
National white total	35	51	61	64
Northern whites only	42	58	68	70
Southern whites only	12	38	44	51
<i>Public Transportation Integration</i>				
National white total	44	60	79	78
Northern whites only	57	73	89	88
Southern whites only	4	27	52	51

spect to residential integration and the integration of public transportation. The three later surveys used exactly the same questions that were employed in 1942. These were: "If a Negro with the same income and education as you have moved into your block, would it make any difference to you?"¹¹ and "Generally speaking, do you think there should be separate sections for Negroes on streetcars and buses?" Nationwide, in 1942 only 35 per cent of American whites would not have objected to a Negro neighbor of their own social class; by 1963 almost two out of three would accept such a neighbor. Nationwide, in 1942 fewer than half of all American whites approved of integrated transportation facilities; by 1963 almost four out of five had adopted this view. The changes are especially dramatic among Southern whites, for in 1942 only one out of eight of them would have accepted a Negro neighbor and but one in twenty-five the idea of sharing transportation facilities on an integrated basis. By the end of 1963, both forms of integration had achieved majority approval.

Though not shown in the data thus far presented, it should be noted that throughout this twenty-one-year period the proportion of persons having "No opinion" on any of these questions rarely exceeded 3 or 4 per cent. This finding is in sharp contrast to the

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

public's answers on most other national issues, where it is common to find upwards of 10 per cent expressing ignorance or indecision. The fact that almost everybody has been aware of the civil rights issue and has had an opinion on it during all this time has implications for the significance of the trends we have observed. There have been no masses of apathetic or undecided people, swayed this way and that by events, and drifting from segregationist to doubtful, from doubtful to integrationist, and perhaps back again. Rather, support for civil rights today comes from a younger generation that, during the last two decades, has come of age and has replaced an older, more segregationist generation in our population; and from former segregationists whose senses and consciences have been touched by the Negro protest, or who have simply changed their opinions as segregation appears increasingly to be a lost cause.

On four occasions, starting in July 1957, the Gallup Poll has asked the question: "Do you think the day will ever come in the South when whites and Negroes will be going to the same schools, eating in the same restaurants, and generally sharing the same public accommodations?" In 1957 and 1958, only a small majority of white people answered "Yes" to that question; in 1961, the proportion had grown to three-fourths, and by 1963, to five-sixths. Conversely, the proportion who answered "No" (or "Never") had dropped by 1963 to 13 per cent. As the Civil Rights Act of 1964 hastens the day when whites and Negroes actually are sharing the same restaurants and public accommodations and as the pace of Southern school desegregation quickens, it is difficult to foresee any reversal in the massive trends we have shown.

An important shift in white beliefs on one further issue helps explain the trends we have observed and underlines the solid base on which they rest. In 1942, a national sample of whites was asked, "In general, do you think that Negroes are as intelligent as white people—that is, can they learn things just as well if they are given the same education and training?" At that time only about half the Northern whites and one Southern white in five answered "Yes." Today, four-fifths of the white population in the North and a substantial majority in the South (57 per cent) believe that Negroes are as intelligent as white people. The implications of this revolutionary change in attitudes toward Negro educability are far-reaching. It has undermined one of the most stubborn arguments formerly offered by whites for segregated schools and has made the case for segregation much more difficult to defend.

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

Subgroup Differences in White Attitudes Toward the Negro

THE NORC survey of December 1963 asked a national sample of white persons a broad range of questions designed to measure their attitudes toward Negroes and toward the civil rights movement. From this range of questions it was possible to form a Guttman scale of pro-integration attitudes based upon the eight items shown in Table 2.¹² The properties of a Guttman scale are such that if a

TABLE 2. Guttman Scale of Pro-Integration Sentiments

<i>Item</i>	<i>Per Cent Giving Pro-Integration Response (December 1963)</i>
1. "Do you think Negroes should have as good a chance as white people to get any kind of job, or do you think white people should have the first chance at any kind of job?" ("As good a chance.")	82
2. "Generally speaking, do you think there should be separate sections for Negroes in street cars and buses?" ("No.")	77
3. "Do you think Negroes should have the right to use the same parks, restaurants and hotels as white people?" ("Yes.")	71
4. "Do you think white students and Negro students should go to the same schools, or to separate schools?" ("Same schools.")	63
5. "How strongly would you object if a member of your family wanted to bring a Negro friend home to dinner?" ("Not at all.")	49
6. "White people have a right to keep Negroes out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and Negroes should respect that right." ("Disagree slightly" or "Disagree strongly.")	44
7. "Do you think there should be laws against marriages between Negroes and whites?" ("No.")	36
8. "Negroes shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted." ("Disagree slightly" or "Disagree strongly.")	27

person rejects one item on the scale, the chances are at least nine in ten that he will also reject all items below it. Thus, those who reject the top item—equal job rights for Negroes—are highly unlikely to endorse any of the other items on the scale and may be considered extreme segregationists. At the other end of the scale, the 27 per cent

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

who disagree with the proposition that "Negroes shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted" are extremely likely to take a pro-integrationist position on all seven of the other items.

It may be seen that each of the top four items—equal job rights and integration of transportation facilities, public accommodations, and schools—has the support of at least 63 per cent of the white population. (It helps in interpreting the magnitude of public opinion poll percentages to remember that Lyndon Johnson polled only 62 per cent of the popular vote in his "landslide" election over Barry Goldwater. Americans are seldom unanimous about anything, and majorities as high as 80 per cent on any serious issue are extremely rare.) Opinions are more evenly divided on social mixing and residential integration (Items 5 and 6), while the great majority of whites take a firm stand against racial intermarriage and aggressive integrationist activity (Items 7 and 8).¹³

The Pro-Integration Scale provides a convenient measure of integrationist sentiment, since it is possible to assign each individual in the survey a score ranging from 0 to 8, depending upon the number of pro-integration responses he gave. From there it is a small step to compute mean (average) scores for various population groups to determine the locus of pro- and anti-civil rights attitudes. A simple calculation reveals that the mean score for all white Americans is 4.29, which indicates that the average white person accepts the first four propositions and would dislike but would not totally reject the idea of a family member bringing a Negro friend home to dinner. Table 3 shows the distribution of the mean scores among the more relevant subgroups of the white population.

Not surprisingly, the greatest differences are regional. The differences between Northern whites and Southern whites, even when such factors as age, sex, and educational level are controlled, are almost always greater than the differences between various population groups within the same region. Northern whites *in toto*, for example, have a scale score of 4.97. (The average white Northerner endorses integrated schools and would scarcely object if a Negro guest were brought home to dinner.) Southern whites, in contrast, show a scale score of 2.54. (The average white Southerner accepts equal job opportunities and integrated transportation facilities, but he is doubtful about parks, restaurants, and hotels, and he still draws the line at school integration.) But within the two broad geographical regions, interesting differences are nevertheless observable. (See Table 3-A.) In the North, pro-

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

TABLE 3. Mean Scores on Pro-Integration Scale
(White Population, U.S.A., December 1963)

	North	South		North	South
TOTAL.....	4.97	2.54			
A. By Region:			F. By Age Group:		
New England.....	5.03	—	Under 25.....	5.70	2.76
Middle Atlantic.....	5.47	—	25-44.....	5.34	2.86
East North Central..	4.61	—	45-64.....	4.71	2.33
West North Central..	4.37	—	65-up.....	4.07	2.10
South Atlantic.....	—	2.53			
East South Central..	—	1.89	G. By Religion:		
West South Central..	—	2.70	Protestant.....	4.75	2.38
Mountain.....	4.33	—	Catholic.....	5.18	3.41
Pacific.....	5.43	—	Jewish.....	6.44	a
B. By Population Size:			H. By Strength		
10 largest M.A.'s....	5.33	a	of Religious Belief:		
All other M.A.'s....	4.97	2.65	Very strong.....	5.00	2.34
Urban counties.....	5.04	1.36	Strong.....	5.15	2.86
Rural counties.....	4.23	2.70	Moderate.....	4.87	2.53
C. By Number of Negroes			Not strong.....	4.30	2.37
in Public Schools:					
No Negroes.....	4.62	2.29	I. By Educational Level:		
A few Negroes.....	5.01	2.80	8 years or less.....	3.88	1.70
Considerable number.	5.49	a	9-12 years (H.S.).....	5.01	2.71
D. By Prior Residence:			Attended college.....	5.96	3.54
Formerly lived in			J. By Family Income:		
South.....	4.80	—	Under \$5,000.....	4.36	2.20
Never lived in			\$5,000-7,499.....	5.24	2.75
South.....	5.05	—	\$7,500-9,999.....	5.26	2.78
Formerly lived in			\$10,000 or over.....	5.56	3.41
North.....	—	3.22			
Never lived in			K. By Occupation:		
North.....	—	1.97	Professional.....	6.08	4.32
E. By Sex:			Proprietors, managers..	5.09	2.79
Male.....	4.91	2.57	Clerical, sales.....	4.96	2.98
Female.....	5.03	2.51	Skilled.....	4.90	2.04
			Semi-skilled.....	4.77	1.63
			Unskilled.....	4.73	1.82
			Farm.....	3.86	2.87

* Insufficient cases to justify reliable answers.

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

integration sentiment is strongest on the East and West coasts, weakest in the Midwest. Specifically, the highest scores are found in the Middle Atlantic region (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) and in the three Pacific states. New England is somewhat lower, but still higher than the East North Central area (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin), which in turn is higher than the less urbanized states of the plains area comprising the West North Central region, and the Mountain region. Geographical variation appears also in the South, where Southwestern states (Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma) have the highest pro-integration score, closely followed by the South Atlantic region (stretching from Delaware and Maryland through Virginia and the Carolinas to Georgia and Florida). Lowest of all is the East South Central region, which includes Kentucky and Tennessee, but also Mississippi and Alabama. Yet even in the latter region (where many whites score "0" on the scale), the average white person has just about accepted two of the eight pro-integration statements.

As of December 1963, the highest scale scores were found in the ten largest metropolitan areas, all but one of which (Washington, D. C.) are in the North (3-B). However, the date of the survey preceded the summer riots in some of these Northern cities in 1964 and the increased protests against job discrimination and *de facto* school segregation that have occurred in New York, Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, and other Northern metropolises during the last year or two. Whether and to what extent these more recent events may have increased or reduced pro-integrationist attitudes in the large Northern cities is not known. It will be noted that, in both North and South, the more Negroes are integrated into the public schools, the higher the scores on the Pro-Integration Scale (3-C). There are too few Southern respondents living in areas where the schools are "considerably" integrated to justify presentation of the figure, but it is still higher than that for areas in which only a "few Negroes" attend the schools. The general finding confirms our earlier analysis of the trend data.

Turning from community variables, such as region, population size, and degree of school integration, to individual characteristics, perhaps one of the most significant findings is that shown in Part D of the table. Northerners who formerly lived in the South (and these may be either Southern migrants or Northerners who spent some time in the South) are only slightly less pro-integrationist than their neighbors who have never been exposed to Southern life. In

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

contrast, Southerners who have previously resided in the North differ greatly from their co-regionalists who have known nothing but Southern life. The net effect of migration from one of the regions to the other seems to be a strengthening of the cause of integration. Ex-Southerners who move to the North appear generally to conform to Northern attitudes, while ex-Northerners who move to the South (and Southerners who have been temporarily exposed to Northern living) tend to reject the more extreme segregationist views of the life-long Southerner.

Men and women differ little in their scores on this Pro-Integration Scale, but age differences are more marked and are of considerable interest (3-E,F). In both North and South, the older age groups are clearly the more segregationist. The forty-five to sixty-four group has lower scores than the twenty-five to forty-four, while those sixty-five or older have the lowest scores of all. The same finding was observed in the 1956 NORC studies, and suggests that part of the long-term trend in white attitudes is due to the passing of an elderly less tolerant generation and their replacement in the population by younger adults who are more likely to accept racial integration. But we note a singular inversion of the relationship between age and pro-integration sentiment among the two youngest age groups in the South. Unexpectedly, the very youngest Southern adults (aged twenty-one to twenty-four) have lower Pro-Integration Scale scores than the twenty-five to forty-four year old group. The same result occurred in the June 1963 survey but not in the 1956 studies. We have suggested elsewhere¹⁴ that the current group of young white adults in the South have grown up and received their schooling and formed their attitudes during the stormy years which followed the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregated schools. It is they who have been most immediately exposed to the crises and dislocations brought to the South by the Negro protest movement. Perhaps the surprise is that these Southern white youths today are nonetheless more pro-integrationist than are their parents and grandparents who are over the age of forty-five.

Among Northern whites, Catholics are slightly more integrationist than Protestants, and Jews much more so (3-G). In the South, Catholics are among the most liberal of all the groups shown in the table, scoring well above the Southern norm. All persons interviewed were asked not only their religious preference, but also "How strongly do you feel about your religious beliefs?" The respective scale scores are shown in Part H of Table 3. The pattern,

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

clearly in the South and to some extent in the North, is for the middle groups ("strongly" and "moderately") to have the higher Pro-Integration scores, while both extreme groups are lower. One might speculate that persons who feel strongly or even moderately about their religious beliefs are more likely to see all men as equal in the sight of God and to regard segregation (or at least some aspects of segregation) as immoral, while those who hold only nominal religious beliefs or none at all might lack this moral imperative. The fact that those who are "very strongly" religious score lower than expected on the scale, and especially low in the South, suggests that such persons may derive support for their segregationist views from certain passages of the Bible often quoted by fundamentalist preachers.

Occupation, educational level, and family income are highly intercorrelated and are often combined to provide a single measure of socioeconomic status. Presented independently, as they are in Table 3 (I,J,K), they all point in the same direction, with quite remarkable consistency. The inescapable conclusion is that the higher a person's socioeconomic status, as measured by these three characteristics, the higher his score on the Pro-Integration Scale. The differences by educational level are remarkably strong and have been duplicated in all earlier NORC studies. Education is correlated with age, of course, so that much of the differences by age which we noted earlier simply reflects the higher educational level attained by younger adults, as compared with their parents and grandparents. This is not to say that education, or any other single factor, is all-important. It may be observed that the Southern white who attended college nevertheless has a lower scale score than the Northern white with eight years of schooling or less. Yet, as higher proportions of the nation's youth go on to college, as higher proportions enter white-collar and professional rather than farm or production employment, and as (and if) family income levels continue to rise, we may reasonably expect the long-term trend in white attitudes toward acceptance of racial integration not only to continue but even to accelerate.

Views of the Civil Rights Movement

We have described the changing attitudes of white Americans over a twenty-year period and have examined what might be called the epidemiology of anti-Negro prejudice as it existed at the end

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

of 1963. We have seen which subgroups of white persons manifest the greatest support for and the greatest resistance to integration. We have also indicated, by means of the Pro-Integration Scale, some of the components of these attitudes—the forms of Negro equality which are acceptable to various groups of whites and the kinds at which they draw the line. As stated earlier, however, the Pro-Integration Scale utilized only eight of a much larger number of questions about Negro-white relations. It will be instructive now to observe how Northern whites and Southern whites and persons of varying degrees of prejudice regard the Negro protest movement in general as well as in some of its ramifications. The first two columns of Table 4 compare the opinions of Northern whites and Southern whites, without regard to their Pro-Integration Scale scores. The next four columns compare the opinions of four groups, ranging in scale scores from High Segregationist to High Integrationist, without regard to their place of residence.

We see first (Table 4-A) that the main goals of the civil rights movement are similarly perceived by all white Americans—North and South, integrationist and segregationist. Three-quarters or more of all of these groups believe that most Negroes feel strongly about equal job opportunities and the right to vote. It is probably no coincidence that job equality and the vote are the very things which a representative sample of Negroes themselves have said are "most important to work for," and are also the Negro demands which white Americans are most willing to accept.¹⁵ Almost as many whites, in December 1963, perceived that Negroes feel strongly about equal access to parks, hotels, restaurants, and other public accommodations. The right to send their children to white schools was believed to be very important to Negroes by the majority of Northern whites, but by only about a third of the Southerners. Similarly, more Northern than Southern whites believe Negroes feel strongly about residential integration. These differences probably reflect the actualities of the civil rights struggle in the two regions. In many cities throughout the North, Negroes have made plain their demands for better housing and an end to *de facto* school segregation, while demonstrations in the South have focused more often on voting rights, employment, and public accommodations. Recognition of what it is that the Negro wants is distorted remarkably little by the white person's own attitudes toward integration. The overwhelming majority of even the most highly segregationist group do not deny that the Negro feels strongly about job

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

TABLE 4. White Attitudes Toward Negro Protest Movement in North and South,
and by Scores on Pro-Integration Scale, December 1963

Per Cent Who Say:	North	South	Pro-Integration Scale Scores			
			0-2 (High Seg.)	3-4 (Mod. Seg.)	5-6 (Mod. Int.)	7-8 (High Int.)
A. Most Negroes feel strongly about						
The right to vote.....	80%	77%	79%	76%	84%	79%
Right to hold same jobs as white people.....	84	81	76	84	85	89
Right to use same parks, hotels, restaurants.....	84	80	67	82	83	90
Right to send children to same schools as whites.....	63	35	45	51	59	66
Right to live in white neighborhoods.....	45	33	42	39	42	44
Right to marry white people.	10	8	13	9	7	10
Having a separate area of U. S. set aside for Negroes.....	5	3	7	6	4	2
B. The Negro protest movement has been generally violent rather than peaceful.....	47%	63%	78%	50%	47%	30%
C. Demonstrations have hurt rather than helped the Negro cause....	43%	60%	71%	52%	45%	24%
D. Generally disapprove of actions Negroes have taken to obtain civil rights.....	59%	78%	89%	73%	62%	33%
E. Negro groups are asking for too much.....	37%	55%	74%	45%	31%	16%
F. "Others" are really behind the Negro protest movement.....	39%	52%	56%	46%	43%	24%
Communists are behind it.....	21	27	30	26	22	12
G. Problem of Negro rights should be left to states rather than federal government.....	34%	59%	57%	45%	36%	24%
H. Negro-white relations will always be a problem for U. S.....	42%	49%	61%	52%	36%	26%
*I. Self or family have been affected favorably by integration.....	4%	1%	—%	2%	4%	7%
Have been affected unfavorably	9	11	16	14	4	3
Have not been affected.....	87	83	82	83	91	87
J. Are around Negroes:						
Almost every day.....	29%	39%	33%	28%	31%	35%
Less often than that.....	45	52	45	47	46	51
Never around Negroes.....	26	9	22	25	23	14

* Percentages do not always add to 100 per cent. Omitted are a small group who answered vaguely or irrelevantly.

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

equality and the right to vote; nor, as the percentage figures indicate, do they delude themselves that Negroes feel strongly about their right to marry white people or that they really want to have their own separate state.

The items shown on Lines B-F of Table 4, on the other hand, all refer to Negro actions in the civil rights struggle, rather than to Negro goals, and here we find sharp cleavages between North and South and between persons with low and high Pro-Integration scores. The majority of Southern whites, and even larger proportions of the highly segregationist group, perceive the Negro protest movement as having been generally violent rather than generally peaceful; they think that demonstrations and other direct action by Negroes have hurt their cause rather than helped it; they themselves disapprove of "the actions Negroes have taken to get the things they want"; they say Negroes are asking for "too much," rather than "too little" or "just about what they should"; and they believe that, not the Negro people, but "some other person or group" is "really behind the recent Negro actions." A substantial majority of Northern whites also say they generally disapprove of Negro actions in the struggle, but on none of the other of these items (B-F) can a majority be mustered in the North. Persons who score high on the Pro-Integration Scale are even more sympathetic to the Negro protest movement and overwhelmingly reject all of these opinions. Differences are also found on Lines G-H, which reflect a larger view of Negro-white relations. Segregationists, for example, tend to believe that "the question of Negro rights is more a problem that individual states should solve," and Southerners, whatever their attitudes toward integration, are even more likely to hold this view. The great majority of integrationists and of Northerners, on the other hand, see Negro rights as "a problem that the federal government should solve." Similarly, segregationists are much more pessimistic about the future, the majority of them believing that "Negro-white relations will always be a problem for the United States"; but the great majority of integrationists believe that "a solution will eventually be worked out."

Part I of Table 4 is of considerable interest and importance. The percentages are based on replies to the open-ended question, "In what ways have you or any members of your family been affected by integration?" The question came toward the end of the interview, after extended discussion of the civil rights movement, and interviewers were instructed to probe for any ways at all in which the

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

respondent or any members of his family had been personally affected. Somewhat surprisingly, 86 per cent of American whites said they had not been affected at all, and the proportion differed very little from North to South, or according to attitudes toward integration. As shown on Line J, large numbers of American whites have had little or no exposure to the opposite race; one-fourth of Northern whites say they are "never around Negroes" and only 29 per cent are around them almost every day. On the other hand, it was clear from the verbatim replies that a substantial proportion of the unaffected had actually experienced integration and accepted it quite casually: "No, I just go my way and they don't bother me." "Not at all. My boy goes to school with them but he never mentions any problems." "None, my husband works with some colored fellows and they get along fine." About one white person in ten said he had been affected unfavorably by integration. The behavior of Negro children in school, an influx of Negroes into the neighborhood, or unpleasant contacts with Negroes in public places were each mentioned by 2 or 3 per cent of the white public. Only 1 per cent referred to unfavorable effects of job integration. Three per cent of all whites reported favorable effects of integration, explaining that the Negroes had not turned out to be so bad after all or that they enjoyed excellent relations. The ratio of unfavorable to favorable effects was 11-to-1 in the South, but only 2.5-to-1 in the North. Among those with pro-integrationist attitudes, favorable effects were mentioned more often than unfavorable

Since December 1963

We are aware that many readers will question the relevance of public opinion poll findings from December 1963 to the situation today. After all, the year 1964 alone saw the nomination of Barry Goldwater, the Presidential election campaign, general elections in every state, Congressional passage of a comprehensive Civil Rights Act, Negro rioting in several Northern cities, the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi—to mention only some of the most striking events which might have affected the attitudes we have described. And the pace of the civil rights movement in 1965 has shown no signs of slackening. We urge such readers, however, to regain their perspective by looking again at the twenty-year trend shown in Chart 1, and especially at the absence of short-run change over the three separate surveys conducted in 1956 and

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

1963, when racial tensions were also high. It cannot be doubted that people do respond to short-run events and often have very strong opinions about them. But all the evidence we know of indicates that attitudes toward the basic issues included in the Pro-Integration Scale—such as school and residential integration, social mixing, the use by Negroes of public accommodations—are not subject to sudden and dramatic shifts. If all the events in the months and years preceding December 1963 did not halt the rising trend toward acceptance of integration, it may be doubted that more recent events have produced any major change in the attitudes we have examined.

Indeed, the 1964 Presidential election itself provided a very important test of civil rights sentiment in the United States, for there, "in the privacy of the voting booth," the widely heralded "white backlash" failed to materialize in the North, while President Johnson carried the South in spite of his forthright stand on civil rights for Negroes. The result could hardly be construed as other than a rejection by the American people of the views of those who would try to stem the progress of the Negro protest movement. Yet, both the Gallup Poll and the Harris Survey, during 1964 and 1965, reported seeming inconsistencies in the attitudes of the white public. Each has found, just as we saw in the 1963 NORC study, that whites generally disapprove of direct action by Negroes and would welcome relief from racial tensions. Thus, Harris reported (August 17, 1964) that "Fully 87 per cent of the American people feel that the recent riots in New York, Rochester and Jersey City have hurt the Negro cause," and (May 17, 1965) that there existed an "... apparent uneasiness of the American people over the current pace of civil rights progress. Six months ago, the public tended to feel that steady and sound progress was being registered. After recent events, the number who feel things are moving 'too fast' has risen rather sharply." (The increase was from 32 per cent in November to 41 per cent in May, shortly after the events in Selma, Alabama.) Only six days earlier (May 11, 1965) Gallup had also warned that "Criticism of integration speed has grown among Northern whites. ... The number who believe the Johnson Administration is pushing integration 'too fast' has grown considerably over the last few weeks." Gallup had also been reporting such results as (June 7, 1964) "Eight in ten say demonstrations more likely to hurt than to help Negro. ... Opposition among both races has grown," and (November 12, 1964) "Six in ten favor a gradual approach" to

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

enforcement of the new Civil Rights Law rather than "strict enforcement right from the beginning." In that same release, Gallup reported that 73 per cent of his sample "think Negroes should stop demonstrating, now that they have made their point."

But both of these polling agencies have also reported a steady support for civil rights measures. Harris found a large and increasing majority for the 1964 Civil Rights bill between November 1963 and April 1964, with 70 per cent of the public favoring it by the latter date. Both polls reported public approval of the 1965 voting rights bill, though their figures differed considerably. Gallup (April 14, 1965) found 76 per cent in favor, Harris (May 10, 1965) only 53 per cent, the difference apparently tracing to a reference in the Harris question that "opponents feel this is an invasion of the rights of states to control their own elections." The Gallup question made no mention of states' rights. Gallup also found (March 19, 1965) that 56 per cent of the public believe that people who cannot read or write should nevertheless have the right to vote and that 63 per cent disagree with the proposition that only persons who have had at least five years of schooling should be allowed to vote.

Opportunity to apply a more rigorous test of the hypothesis that the long-term trends are still intact finally occurred in June 1965, when NORC was able to append a few of the 1942-1963 questions to a current national survey. It was not possible to ask all of the items included in the December 1963 survey, but the measures which were obtained strongly confirmed the inexorability of the trend. The proportion of white Americans who favor school integration rose from 62 per cent to 67 per cent during this eighteen-month period, and the proportion who would not object to a Negro neighbor of the same social class rose from 64 per cent to 68 per cent. Perhaps the most striking finding was that the increases were accounted for entirely by the South. While the figures for the North held steady or showed small and insignificant fluctuations, Southern attitudes were undergoing revolutionary change. The proportion of Southern whites who favor integrated schools almost doubled within this eighteen-month period, moving from 30 per cent at the end of 1963 to 55 per cent—a clear majority—in mid-1965. The proportion of Southern whites who would not object to a Negro neighbor rose from 51 per cent to 66 per cent during this same period. Again it was found that exposure to integration fosters pro-integrationist attitudes. Of Southern whites whose children had attended school with Negroes, 74 per cent said Negroes and whites

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

should attend the same schools; of Southern whites whose children had not attended school with Negroes, only 48 per cent held that view.

There will, of course, be those who now ask, "But what about Los Angeles? Surely that violence must have produced a white revulsion against civil rights"—but if the past is any guide, the answer can be predicted with considerable assurance. Certainly large majorities of American whites, and especially the dwindling ranks of segregationists, will say that the Los Angeles rioting has "hurt the Negro's cause," that "they have made their point," and that nothing is settled by violence, but not even Los Angeles will halt the massive attitudinal changes we have demonstrated over the last generation. Furthermore, it should be noted that the rioting in Watts took scarcely anyone by surprise. The June 1965 NORC survey asked, "As you probably recall, there were race riots in several Northern cities last summer. The way it looks now, do you expect that this summer there will be many race riots around the country, some, hardly any, or none at all?" Only 2 per cent said they expected no Negro rioting during the summer, and almost a quarter of the white population expected many riots. Thus, the unprecedentedly high level of support expressed for integration in this survey actually seems to have discounted Los Angeles in advance. With the full expectation of at least some riots in Northern cities, American whites nevertheless (or perhaps for that reason?) actually increased their support of integration.

A recent (but pre-Los Angeles) Gallup Poll release confirms the remarkable change in white Southern attitudes between 1963 and 1965. In May 1963, Gallup asked a representative sample of white parents, "Would you yourself have any objection to sending your children to a school where a few of the children are colored?" and 61 per cent of those in the South said, "Yes, I would object." When he repeated the same question two years later, the proportion of Southern parents who would object had dropped abruptly to 37 per cent. Similar, though less dramatic, changes were found in the attitudes of Northern parents. The millennium has scarcely arrived. Gallup went on to ask whether the parents would object to sending their children to a school where half, and then where more than half, of the children were colored. A majority of white parents in the North and almost four out of five of those in the South said they would object to the latter situation.

Certainly there is no evidence that the majority of American

White Attitudes Toward the Negro

whites eagerly look forward to integration. Most are more comfortable in a segregated society, and they would prefer that the demonstrators slow down or go away while things are worked out more gradually. But most of them know also that racial discrimination is morally wrong and recognize the legitimacy of the Negro protest. Our survey data persuasively argue that where there is little or no protest against segregation and discrimination, or where these have the sanction of law, racial attitudes conform to the existing situation. But when attention is kept focused on racial injustice and when acts of discrimination become contrary to the law of the land, racial attitudes change. Conversely, there is no persuasive evidence thus far that either demonstrations and other forms of direct action, or legal sanctions applied by government, create a backlash effect and foster segregationist sentiment. On the contrary, they may simply demonstrate, ever more conclusively, that it is more costly to oppose integration than to bring it about. The mass of white Americans have shown in many ways that they do not want a racist government and that they will not follow racist leaders. Rather, they are engaged in the painful task of adjusting to an integrated society. It will not be easy for most, but one cannot at this late date doubt the basic commitment. In their hearts they know that the American Negro is right.

REFERENCES

1. Hadley Cantril, *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Princeton, N. J., 1951). This volume is a compendium of published poll results during the first dozen years of systematic opinion research. All twenty-seven questions listed under "Negroes" are dated 1942 or later; thirty-two of thirty-three questions listed under "U.S. Race Relations" are dated 1942 or later. The three questions on lynching referred to below were found under "Crime and Criminals."
2. Gallup Poll releases, July 21, 1963, October 2, 1963, *et passim*. The question, "What do you regard as the most vital issue before the American people today?" was first asked in September 1935 (the answer was "Unemployment") and has been repeated by the Gallup Poll at regular intervals, with slight changes of wording, since that time. "Racial problems" was not mentioned frequently enough to receive a separate code until 1944-1945.
3. "America's Mood Today," *Look*, June 29, 1965.
4. Harris Survey news release, May 17, 1965.
5. *Look* and Harris survey, *op. cit.*

PAUL B. SHEATSLEY

6. Much of the material in this section has previously been presented in Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, "Attitudes Toward Desegregation," *Scientific American*, Vol. 211 (July 1964), pp. 16-23.
7. The question was asked also in 1944 and 1946. Results for those years, while consistent with the trend, are not shown for reasons of space. Absence of financial support precluded asking the question on any other occasions, so we cannot conclude that the trend lines are uniformly smooth.
8. "South" refers to the South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central regions, as defined by the Bureau of the Census. "North" refers to the rest of the country, except Alaska and Hawaii, where no interviews were conducted.
9. Sample sizes ranged from 1,250 to 1,500. The minor changes from one 1956 or 1963 survey to another are well within the range of normal sampling error.
10. The same holds true for the North. Northern whites living in segregated school areas were 65 per cent for integration, but in areas where there had been considerable integration, 83 per cent favored the policy.
11. In the 1956 and 1963 surveys, a special category was added for the response, "Yes, I would welcome it," and persons giving this reply were combined with the "No Difference" group.
12. We are indebted to Donald J. Treiman of the NORC staff for construction of this scale.
13. The latter item is admittedly loaded, since it is perfectly reasonable to take the position that nobody—white or Negro—should push himself where he isn't wanted. The item does have the advantage, however, of defining a minimum estimate of pro-integrationist sentiment in the country, since anyone who disagrees with it is hardly likely to be unsympathetic to any aspect of the civil rights movement.
14. *Scientific American*, *op. cit.*
15. Negro data from unpublished NORC survey, May 1963. In the survey under discussion, 79 per cent of the white public agreed that "It should be made easier than it is now for Negroes to vote in the South."